

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

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USMISSION NATO

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 6732

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SP

SUBJECT: INTERNAL FALLOUT OF PRIME MINISTER'S INTERVIEW
WITH FRENCH MAGAZINE

REF: PARIS 24647

BEGIN SUMMARY. PRIME MINISTER SUAREZ' INTERVIEW WITH "PARIS
MATCH" IS UNDERSTOOD TO HAVE RESULTED IN MFA PROTEST TO GOF.
IT HAS ALSO LED TO AN OFFICIAL PUBLIC DENIAL OF THE INTERVIEW'S
CONTENTS, AND PROTESTS FROM CATALAN NATIONALISTS TO SUAREZ.
END SUMMARY.

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1. REMARKS OF PRIME MINISTER SUAREZ PUBLISHED IN AUGUST 28

EDITION OF PARIS MATCH (REFTEL) HAVE BEEN WIDELY REPORTED IN LOCAL PRESS AND RESULTED IN GOS PROTEST BY CATALAN NATIONALISTS OF SUAREZ' ALLEGED STATEMENTS. FONMIN OREJA TOLD AMBASSADOR AUGUST 31 THAT SO-CALLED "INTERVIEW" WAS NOT A NORMAL PRESS INTERVIEW INASMUCH AS SUAREZ HAD ONLY HAD AN INFORMAL, OFF-THE-RECORD, CONVERSATION WITH FRENCH JOURNALISTS AUGUST 13. OREJA SAID THAT MUCH OF THE INTERVIEW AS PUBLISHED WAS ERRONEOUS AND THIS WAS EVIDENT IN THE HIGHLY QUESTIONABLE STATEMENT THAT FRANCO HAD ONCE TOLD SUAREZ TO PREPARE HIMSELF FOR "DEMOCRACY." AS A CONSEQUENCE, OREJA SAID SUAREZ WAS QUITE DISTURBED BY THE MISREPRESENTATIONS IN PARIS MATCH AND HAD INSTRUCTED THE MFA TO LODGE A PROTEST WITH THE GOF THROUGH THE FRENCH EMBASSY.

2. THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE ISSUED SEPT 1 A STATEMENT DESCRIBING COMMENTS AS "OFF-THE-RECORD" CONVERSATION WHICH TOOK PLACE DURING A "PHOTO REPORT" REQUESTED BY "PARIS MATCH." NO NOTES WERE TAKEN NOR WAS ANY TRANSCRIPTION MADE "WHICH EXPLAINS THE INACCURACIES OF THE PUBLISHED TEXT." THE STATEMENT AFFIRMS THAT "OPINIONS AND PHRASES APPEAR IN THE TEXT WHICH DO NOT REFLECT THE THINKING OF THE PRIME MINISTER... SOME STATEMENTS WERE ABSOLUTELY NOT MADE DURING THE INTERVIEW." THE CIVIL GOVERNOR OF BARCELONA ON HIS RETURN FROM MADRID THE SAME DAY RELEASED THE PRESIDENCY'S STATEMENT IN BARCELONA WITH THE ADDITIONAL COMMENT THAT "THE PRIME MINISTER HARBORS NO DOUBTS ABOUT THE CAPACITY OF THE CATALAN LANGUAGE TO EXPRESS THE MOST PROFOUND AND UP-TO-DATE UNIVERSITY AND SCIENTIFIC STUDIES."

3. THE LEADER OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF CATALONIA, JOSEP PALLACH, HAS SENT A TELEGRAM TO SUAREZ PROTESTING THE PRIME MINISTER'S ALLEGED STATEMENT THAT IT WAS "STUPID" TO SUGGEST THAT A SECONDARY SCHOOL DIPLOMA COULD BE EARNED IN BASQUE OR CATALAN BECAUSE IT WOULD BE NECESSARY FIRST TO FIND TEACHERS WHO COULD TEACH SCIENCES IN THESE LANGUAGES. PALLACH SAID THAT CATALAN WAS PERFECTLY SUITABLE FOR TEACHING SCIENCES AND THAT IF THERE WERE ANY DIFFICULTIES WITH THE CATALAN LANGUAGE THEY STEMMED FROM FORTY YEARS OF BEING PROHIBITED IN SCHOOLS. OTHER CATALAN REPRESENTATIVES HAVE REPORTEDLY EXPRESSED THE

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SAME INDIGNATION.

4. FURTHER TO THE SUMMARY OF SUAREZ' "INTERVIEW" PROVIDED IN REFTEL, WE NOTE THE FOLLOWING OTHER STATEMENTS ALLEGEDLY MADE BY SUAREZ TO "PARIS MATCH" CORRESPONDENT:
-- RELIGION FOR ME IS "FUNDAMENTAL" AND "THE OPUS DEI TO WHICH I BELONGED IS ONLY A PIOUS ORGANIZATION, NOTHING MORE, WITHOUT POLITICAL OR FINANCIAL RAMIFICATIONS."

--THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT FOR ME HAS ONLY BEEN ESSENTIALLY A SOCIAL ORGANIZATION.

--"WE HAVE AN EXCEPTIONAL SOVEREIGN, VERY INTELLIGENT, VERY MUCH AWARE OF THINGS."

-- THE ARMY IS AN OBSTACLE TO THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS.

--DEMOCRACY WILL BE POSSIBLE IN SPAIN"THANKS TO FRANCO, THANKS TO DEVELOPMENTS; SPANIARDS WILL CREATE DEMOCRACY FOR THEMSELVES AND NOT TO PLEASE EUROPEANS OR AMERICANS."

-- THE BASQUE ISSUE IS "A VAST PROBLEM WHICH WILL NEVER BE RESOLVED BY PUBLIC ORDER MEASURES. I CAN EASILY CONCEIVE THAT BASQUES, GALICIANS, ASTURIANS AND CATALANS WOULD HAVE THEIR OWN FLAG AND LANGUAGE. ONE SHOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF DISSENSIONS WITHIN THE ETA AND NEGOTIATE AND THE SAME TIME WITH MODERATE PARTIES, THAT'S WHAT WE'RE TRYING TO DO."

--WHEN I FIRST TOOK OFFICE, "EVERYONE WAS AGAINST ME."

"TODAY THE CAMPAIGN HAS ENDED."

5. COMMENT: SUAREZ HAS NOT AS YET GIVEN A FORMAL INTERVIEW WITH ANY SPANISH NEWSPAPERS. UNDER THE FIRST POST-FRANCO GOVERNMENT LED BY ARIAS, THERE WAS MUCH CRITICISM OF FORMER MINISTERS AREILZA AND FRAGA FOR THEIR FREQUENT PRESS INTERVIEWS ABROAD AND LESS FREQUENT CONTACT WITH THE SPANISH PRESS. SUAREZ HAS HAD THE MISFORTUNE OF HAVING HIS CONTACT WITH PARIS MATCH, FOLLOWING ON TIME COVER STORY, APPEAR AS IF HE WERE FOLLOWING THE SAME TRACK. MOREOVER, THE STATEMENT ATTRIBUTED TO HIM IN PARIS MATCH CONTAINS INDISCRETIONS. THE LOCAL TIME CORRESPONDENT HAS INFORMED US THAT SUAREZ IS LUNCHING WITH FOREIGN PRESS REPS SEPT 2 AND IS SCHEDULED TO LUNCH WITH BRITISH PRESS REPS SEPT 9. THIS PLUS THE NEW GOVT'S DISCONTINUANCE OF THE REGULAR PRACTICE OF PREVIOUS GOVTS TO HOLD PRESS CONFERENCES FOLLOWING CABINET MEETINGS AND LAST WEEK'S MUCH PUBLICIZED RESTRICTION ISSUED FROM THE PRESIDENCY ON THE PUBLISHING OF INFORMATION WITH RESPECT TO CONFIDENTIAL

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PROJECTS ON POLITICAL REFORM PREPARED FOR CABINET COORDINATION DO NOT CONTRIBUTE TO THE CONTINUANCE OF THE RELATIVELY FAVORABLE IMAGE WHICH SPANISH NEWSPAPERMEN HAVE UNTIL NOW TENDED TO PORTRAY THE PRIME MINISTER.
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